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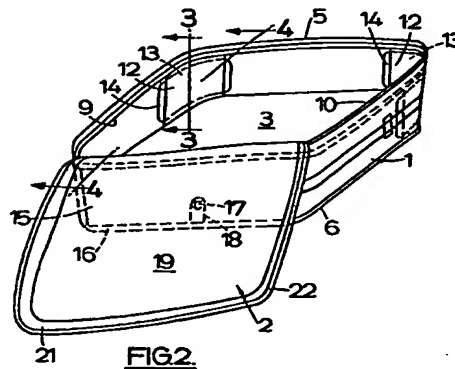
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(54) Improvements relating to luggage cases

(57) A collapsible luggage case of rectangular box form has a lid (2) and a body (1) having top and bottom wall panels (19 and 3) of soft sheet material. The body also has a circumferential wall (4) of sheet material. Stiffening means applied to the body comprises a rectangular stiffening frame around the mouth (5) of the body, a parallel stiffening frame (8) peripherally of the bottom panel, corner stiffeners (14) removably located in pockets (13) provided around the front two corners of the circumferential wall, and a back stiffener (15) releasably located along the back portion of the circumferential wall. The case may be collapsed to bring the top and bottom panels close together by removing the corner stiffeners from their pockets and releasing the back stiffener from its operative position. The lid may also have a stiffening frame. Preferably the frames are of wire and are contained in piping (6, 9).



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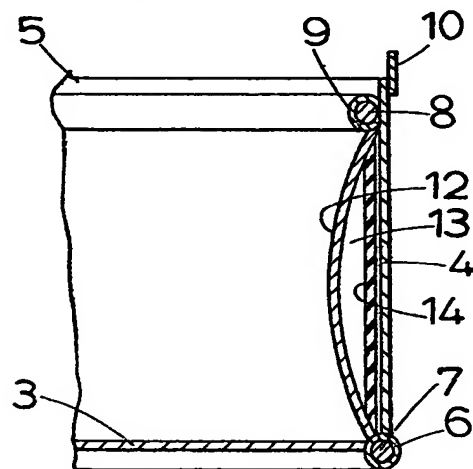
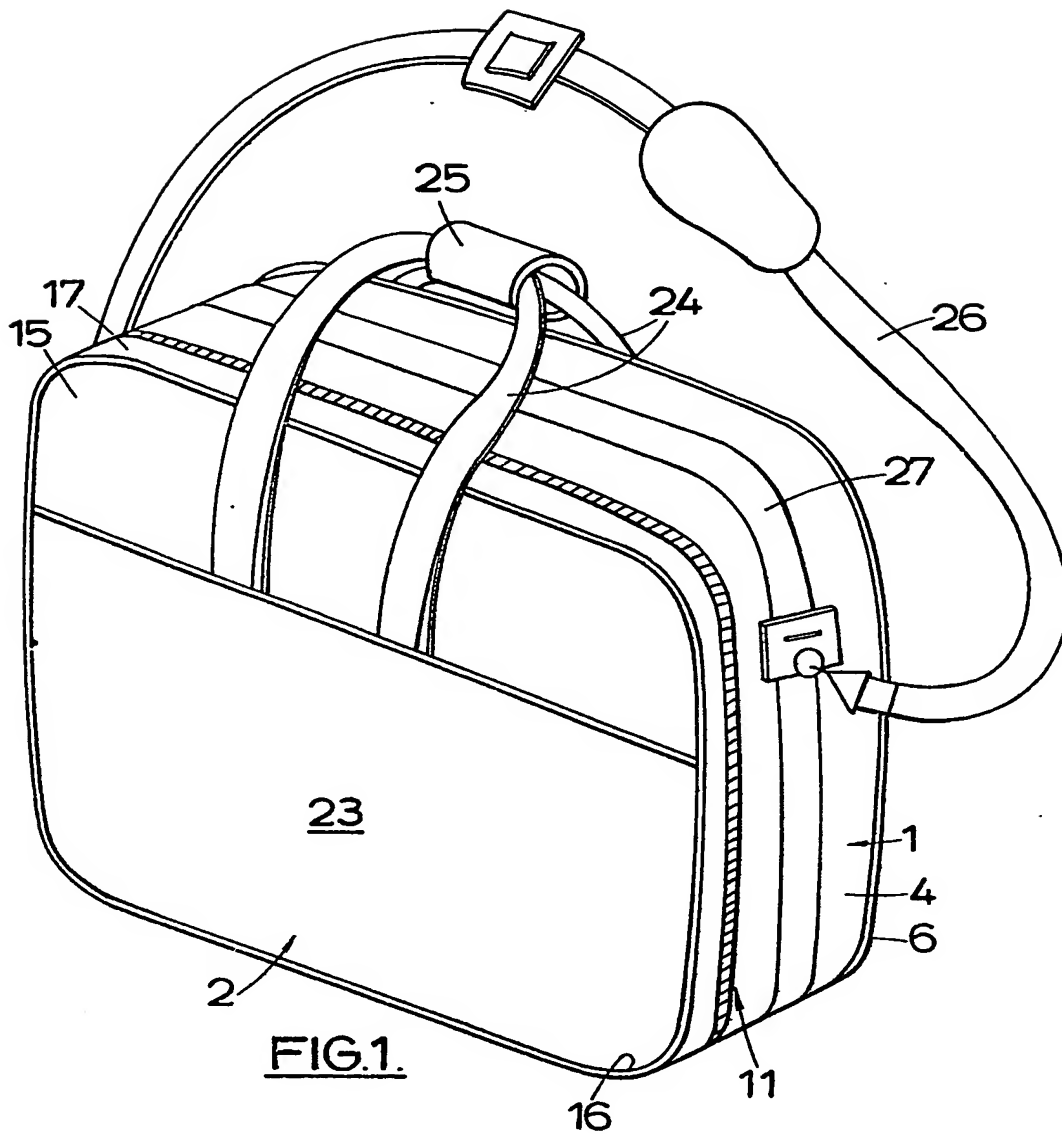


FIG. 3.



SPECIFICATION

Improvements relating to luggage cases

5 This invention relates to luggage cases of the kind made largely from soft materials.

Luggage cases are known which have their bodies and lids fabricated out of soft sheet materials, such as textile fabrics and sheet plastics materials, to which stiffening means is applied which is intended to support the bodies and lids in the required shapes for use. However, there is a need for a luggage case which has a body and lid fabricated out of soft sheet materials supported by stiffening means which give appreciable stability to the shapes of the body and lid for use, and yet enables the case to be collapsed into a substantially flat state for ease of storage when it is not in use.

The present invention seeks to meet the aforesaid need.

According to one aspect of the present invention a luggage case of generally rectangular box shape comprises a body and lid which present bottom and top wall panels respectively of the box shape and at least the body having a circumferential wall extending from the bottom wall panel and defining a mouth of the body with which the lid co-operates, the bottom and top wall panels and circumferential wall being of soft sheet materials, there being a first stiffening rectangular frame retained to the body peripherally of the bottom wall panel and a second parallel stiffening rectangular frame retained to the case at a position spaced from the first frame, corner stiffeners which are removably located around two front corners of the circumferential wall and back stiffening means releasably or removably located at a back portion of the circumferential wall, the arrangement being such that the frames, corner stiffeners and back stiffening means in combination hold the body erect for use and when the corner stiffeners are removed from the front corners and the back stiffening means released or removed the body can be collapsed to a substantially flat state in which the frames are close together.

According to another aspect of the present invention a luggage case of generally rectangular box shape comprises a body and lid which present bottom and top wall panels respectively of the box shape and at least the body having a circumferential wall extending from the bottom wall panel and defining a mouth of the body with which the lid co-operates, the bottom and top wall panels and circumferential wall being of soft sheet materials, there being a first stiffening rectangular frame retained peripherally of the bottom wall panel and second parallel stiffening rectangular frame retained to the case at a position spaced from the first frame, corner stiffeners which are removably located in pockets of soft material around two front corners of the circumferential wall and back stiffening means releasably or removably located at a back portion of the circumferential wall, the arrangement being such that the frames, corner stiffeners and back stiffening means in combination hold the body erect for use and when the corner stiffeners are removed from their pockets and the back stiffening means released or removed the body can be collapsed to a

substantially flat state in which the frames are close together.

The back stiffening means may comprise a back stiffener releasably located along a substantial part of the length of the back portion of the circumferential wall. The back stiffening means may additionally or alternatively comprise further corner stiffeners located at the rear corners of the circumferential wall.

The corner stiffeners are preferably located in pockets of soft material provided on the circumferential wall.

The top wall panel presented by the lid may fasten directly over the mouth of the body or it may have a peripheral skirt at which the lid co-operates with and fastens over the mouth of the body. In either arrangement the top wall panel may lie close to the bottom wall panel when the body is collapsed, so that the case is then substantially flat and compact for stowing away, or transporting, when it is not required to be used. Preferably the second stiffening frame is retained around the mouth of the body. Additionally, or alternatively, a stiffening frame may be retained to the lid which is in the closed position of the case is disposed parallel to the frame or frames of the body, and which can also lie parallel to those frames when the body is collapsed. The body may be collapsed by removing the corner stiffeners and, if the case is provided with a back stiffener, releasing the back stiffener.

Preferably the stiffening frames are made of wire. They may be made of other materials, however, which will give the necessary support to the soft materials of the case, including plastics moulded to form the frames. Conveniently the frames are held in pockets of soft material. In the preferred form in which the frames are made of wire they are located inside piping applied to the body, and to the lid if the latter has such a frame.

The corner stiffeners may be made of stiff board, metal or plastics material shaped to follow the contours of the front corners of the circumferential wall. Strips of soft sheet material may be secured around the corners of the circumferential wall against its inner surface to define the pockets for the corner stiffeners. Openings into the pockets are preferably directed longitudinally of the circumferential wall.

The back stiffener may be made of similar material to the corner stiffeners. In the preferred form it is flat and occupies substantially the whole area of the back portion between the two back corners of the circumferential wall and the two stiffening frames of the body. When released the back stiffener may be completely separable from the circumferential wall, suitable fastenings, for example press fastenings, being provided on the stiffener and circumferential wall for the purpose. Alternatively the back stiffener may be hingedly connected to the circumferential wall, or to the bottom wall panel, so that it can be swung from an operative position in which it is flat against the back portion of the circumferential wall to a released position to be parallel to, and preferably substantially flat against, the bottom wall panel. A fastening or fastenings, for example one or more press fastenings, may be provided for securing the back stiffener in the operative position.

A luggage case embodying the invention will now be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which,

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the luggage case shown in an erected closed position,

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the luggage case in an open position,

Figure 3 is an enlarged fragmentary section on line 3-3 of Figure 2, and

Figure 4 is an enlarged section on line 4-4 of Figure 3 but with the luggage case closed and collapsed.

In this embodiment the luggage case is in a form particularly suitable for travellers and sports people for carrying their clothes and kit in.

As can be seen in Figure 1 the luggage case is of a generally rectangular box shape with well-rounded corners. The case comprises a body 1 and a lid 2 both of which are made largely of soft fabric materials.

The body 1 has a bottom wall panel 3 and a circumferential wall 4 of the soft material 3. The circumferential wall 4, which defines the mouth 5 of the body, is secured to the periphery of the bottom wall panel 3 by stitching which also secures piping 6 between them which extends around the periphery of the panel externally of the body. A rectangular frame of stiff steel wire is contained in the piping 6 as stiffening for the body. Further stiffening is afforded by a parallel rectangular frame 8, similarly of stiff steel wire, which is contained in piping 9 secured around the inside of the circumferential wall 4 near to but spaced from the mouth 5 of the body. A first stringer 10 of a zip fastener 11 is secured by stitching to the circumferential wall around the exterior of the mouth.

Secured by stitching against the inside of the circumferential wall 4 around its two front corners are strips 12, Figures 2 and 3, of soft fabric material, for example woven nylon, which define pockets 13 at the corners. The strips 12 extend almost for the depth of the circumferential wall and are stitched only longitudinally of the circumferential wall, by the same stitching which secures the bottom wall panel and associated piping 6 to the circumferential wall and the other piping 9 to the circumferential wall near the mouth of the body. Thus the pockets so defined are open-ended with the openings into them facing longitudinally of the circumferential wall, as can be seen in Figure 2. In each pocket 13 a corner stiffener 14 is removably located, being made of stiff plastics material of strip form shaped to follow the contour of the corner of the circumferential wall.

A back stiffener 15, Figure 2, which is flat and made of fibre-board is releasably located against the inside surface of a back portion 16 of the circumferential wall. The back stiffener 15 occupies substantially the whole of the area of the back portion 16 between the two back corners of the circumferential wall, the bottom wall panel and the frame 8 near the mouth of the body. An upper edge of the back stiffener 15 is hingedly attached to the back portion 16 at the piping 9 containing the frame 8, and the back stiffener is releasably held in position flat against the back portion by means of a press fastening 17 one component of which is on the back stiffener near its lower edge centrally of its length, and the mating component of which is on a flexible tab 18 anchored to the piping 6

between the circumferential wall and the bottom wall panel 3.

The corner stiffeners 14 and the back stiffeners 15 hold the material of the circumferential wall taut at the front and back of the body, and the combined effect of the stiffeners and the stiffening frames 7, 8 is to give the erected body a substantial degree of rigidity.

The lid 2 has a top wall panel 19 to which is stitched, with piping 20 externally of the lid, a shallow peripheral skirt 21 which is arranged to fit around the outside of the mouth of the body and has stitched to it the second stringer 22 of the zip fastener 11. The lid is permanently attached, as by stitching, by its skirt 21 to the back portion 16 of the circumferential wall of the body.

A pouch 23 is provided on the outside of the lid by a piece of soft material which secured by stitching over part of the top wall panel. There may be a similar pouch on the bottom wall panel of the body. One or more pouches may also be provided inside the case on one or both of the top and bottom panels.

Flexible handles 24 are secured to the bottom and top wall panels which are connected over the front of the case by a detachable grip 25. For optional use for carrying the case there is a shoulder strap 26 of adjustable length which is detachably fastened to a webbing support 27 stitched around the exterior of the circumferential wall.

When the case is not in use the corner stiffeners can be readily slid out of the pockets, the press fastening 17 released and the back stiffener 15 swung away from the back portion of the circumferential wall to a position parallel to the frames 7, 8 so as to enable the body, and thus the case as a whole, to be collapsed into a substantially flat state in which the frames and the top and bottom wall panels, and back stiffener, lie close together, as shown in Figure 4, for ease of stowing the case away. It is a simple matter to insert the corner stiffeners back into the pockets and re-fasten the back stiffener against the circumferential wall to erect the body again when the case is to be used.

CLAIMS

1. a luggage case of generally rectangular box shape comprising a body and lid which present bottom and top wall panels respectively of the box shape and at least the body having a circumferential wall extending from the bottom wall panel and defining a mouth of the body with which the lid co-operates, the bottom and top wall panels and circumferential wall being of soft sheet materials, there being a first stiffening rectangular frame retained to the body peripherally of the bottom wall panel and a second parallel stiffening rectangular frame retained to the case at a position spaced from the first frame, corner stiffeners which are removably located around two front corners of the circumferential wall and back stiffening means releasably or removably located at a back portion of the circumferential wall, the arrangement being such that the frames, corner stiffeners and back stiffening means in combination hold the body erect for use and when the corner stiffeners are removed from the front corners and the back stiffening means released or removed the body can be collapsed to a substantially flat state

in which the frames are close together.

2. A luggage case of generally rectangular box shape comprising a body and lid which present bottom and top wall panels respectively of the box shape and at least the body having a circumferential wall extending from the bottom wall panel and defining a mouth of the body with which the lid co-operates, the bottom and top wall panels and circumferential wall being of soft sheet materials, there being a first stiffening rectangular frame retained peripherally of the bottom wall panel and second parallel stiffening rectangular frame retained to the case at a position spaced from the first frame, corner stiffeners which are removably located in pockets of soft material around two front corners of the circumferential wall and back stiffening means releasably or removably located at a back portion of the circumferential wall, the arrangement being such that the frames, corner stiffeners and back stiffening means in combination hold the body erect for use and when the corner stiffeners are removed from their pockets and the back stiffening means released or removed the body can be collapsed to a substantially flat state in which the frames are close together.
3. A luggage case according to claim 2 in which strips of soft sheet material are secured around the corners of the circumferential wall against its inner surface to define the pockets for the corner stiffeners.
4. A luggage case according to claim 2 or claim 3 in which openings into the pockets are provided directed longitudinally of the circumferential wall.
5. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the lid fastens directly over the mouth of the body.
6. A luggage case according to any one of claims 1 to 4 in which the lid is provided with a peripheral skirt at which the lid co-operates with and fastens over the mouth of the body.
7. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the second stiffening rectangular frame is retained to the body around the mouth.
8. A luggage case according to any one of claims 1 to 6 in which the second stiffening rectangular frame is retained to the lid.
9. A luggage case according to claim 7 in which a further stiffening frame is provided retained to the lid, the further frame being disposed parallel to the frames of the body when the case is assembled for use in its closed position and lying parallel to those frames when the body is collapsed.
10. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the back stiffening means comprises a back stiffener releasably located along a substantial part of the length of the back portion of the circumferential wall and is released from extending along said back portion when the case is to be collapsed.
11. A luggage case according to claim 10 in which the back stiffener is flat and occupies substantially the whole area of the back portion between the two back corners of the circumferential wall.
12. A luggage case according to claim 10 or 11 in which the back stiffener is completely separable from the circumferential wall.
13. A luggage case according to claim 10 or 11 in which the back stiffener is hingedly connected to the

circumferential wall, or to the bottom wall panel, so that it can be swung from an operative position in which it is flat against the back portion of the circumferential wall to a released position in which it is hinged away from the back portion to be parallel to the bottom wall panel.

14. A luggage case according to any one of claims 10 to 13 in which releasable fastenings are provided to secure the back stiffener to the back portion of the circumferential wall.
15. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the back stiffening means comprises further corner stiffeners removably located at each of the rear two corners of the circumferential wall.
16. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the frames are made of wire.
17. A luggage case according to claim 16 in which the wire frames are located inside piping.
18. A luggage case according to any preceding claim in which the corner stiffeners are made of stiff sheet material and are shaped to follow the corners of the circumferential wall.
19. A luggage case substantially as herein described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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